

Call for Citizens' Assembly to follow the SNP and Greens agreement

Edinburgh South West MP, Joanna Cherry, has called on The Scottish Government to hold a citizens' assembly as a way of de-escalating increasing acrimony over government plans to reform the Gender Recognition Act (GRA).

Ms Cherry has written to Shona Robison Cabinet Secretary Social Justice, Housing and Local Government welcoming the commitment to "doing politics better" in the SNP/Green co-operation agreement and shared policy programme. In recognition of the values espoused in the agreement, she has called on The Scottish Government to hold a citizens' assembly to properly consider the highly contentious issue of Gender Recognition Act reform.

She has also called on the government to publish the long-awaited responses to the public consultation on GRA reform and the independent analysis commissioned by The Scottish Government which it received last May.

Ms Cherry said: "I welcome the commitment in the SNP/Green Co-operation agreement to doing politics better with mutual trust, respect, transparency and candour. Like many people, I support reform of the GRA to make it less traumatic for trans people to get a gender recognition certificate. This reflects

the SNP manifesto commitment. What I and many others, do not support is self-identification of sex for anyone, which would negate the importance of sex in the legal protections afforded by the Equality Act, in the Criminal Justice system, in medical research and in many other important areas of public policy.

“The Shared Policy Programme commits to reform of the GRA with a bill to be introduced in this parliamentary session. Yet in relation to this most totemic and controversial legislation, the approach of the partners to the co-operation agreement has not, so far, lived up to the values they have now so clearly espoused. A reset of the debate is now badly needed, and I believe that it is not too late to do that... We need to find a way to facilitate a debate where the voices of all those affected by these reforms can be heard respectfully in line with the values-set out in the co-operation agreement and a full Citizens’ Assembly should be convened to do that. In Ireland, such assemblies dealt successfully with what were fraught debates on equal marriage and abortion rights and I believe in Scotland a Citizens Assembly could do the same for the debate on reform of the GRA.”



Joanna Cherry QC MP PHOTO The Edinburgh Reporter